

# Informing social policy, programs and planning: geospatial enablement and interactive maps of Australian Bureau of Statistics' indexes of advantage and disadvantage

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## SUMMARY

ABS is leading the way in geospatially enabling its data, putting more data into the hands of decision makers and policy analysts as geospatial information to unlock place-based decisions. This spatial enablement also allows geospatial analysts to integrate ABS socio-economic data with other geospatial data to expand the coverage and value add of geospatial information to a broader range of users. A recent example of this is the provision of Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) and Index of Household Advantage and Disadvantage (IHAD) as geospatial webservices and presented in engaging map applications. These applications allow users to interact with more detailed data to discover valuable insights. SEIFA and IHAD summarise Census data into index measures of advantage and disadvantage that enable exploration of the socio-economic conditions of different areas. SEIFA index values are assigned to areas, not to persons or households. A relatively disadvantaged area is likely to contain households that are relatively advantaged; likewise, a relatively advantaged area is likely to contain households that are relatively disadvantaged. IHAD complements the area level rankings given by SEIFA, by allowing the relationship between area level disadvantage and household level disadvantage to be explored. IHAD can also be cross classified with other Census variables to provide valuable insights. Both SEIFA and IHAD are essential tools for social policy, programs, and planning, and play a crucial role in understanding and addressing socio-economic disparities. They: provide accessible summary measures using a range of detailed social and economic indicators; inform a range of topics including housing, education, urban renewal, and social equity. The Digital Atlas of Australia brings together trusted datasets from across government in an interactive, secure, and easy-to-use geospatial platform. The ABS has been working in partnership with Geoscience Australia to make ABS data available on the platform. The SEIFA with IRSD Indicators application and associated SEIFA web services were published on the Digital Atlas of Australia in May 2024. Since then, they have been widely used and are one of the more popular ABS themes on

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the platform. The application allows exploration of the contributing indicator variables derived from 2021 Census data, providing a deeper understanding of local area disadvantage and its drivers. □IHAD is scheduled for release on 11 February 2025 and users will have access to interactive maps and geospatial web services containing the data. ABS plans to include IHAD indicators in the SEIFA application on Digital Atlas of Australia at a later date. □This presentation will showcase how the information in SEIFA and IHAD can be used geospatially to inform users wanting geospatial information about the socio-economic conditions in specific areas and across Australia. It will highlight how geospatial enablement, and technologies substantially enhance the usability and usefulness of data for policy makers, program designers, and spatial planners.

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